

PRINCETON - At a roundtable discussion today with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, other Congressional leaders, and national leaders in the science and technology community, Rep. Rush Holt argued that failure to invest in physical sciences and energy research will continue to impair the nation's economic health. Holt hosted the roundtable, along with Princeton University President Shirley M. Tilghman, to begin an ongoing dialogue about how to ensure our nation's leadership in basic research and innovation. Holt argued that innovation and infrastructure are necessary for sustained economic growth.

"We cannot view research and development as a luxury to be invested in only during good economic times. Rather, it is vital to our economic growth and quality of life," Holt said. "The federal government needs to be a leading force along with the private sector."

"A critical step to jump-starting our economy and restoring economic security for the American people is a commitment to innovation that ensures America's competitiveness in the 21st century global economy," Speaker Pelosi said. "With an Innovation Agenda that invests in our intellectual infrastructure the 111th Congress will work to stimulate the research and development that drives economic growth."

Said President Tilghman: "I salute Speaker Pelosi, our own Congressman Rush Holt, and other members of Congress who have understood the importance of expanding our national investment in the kind of long term basic research -- in the physical sciences as well as in the life sciences -- that historically has fueled American competitiveness, innovation and economic growth. Our roundtable discussions provided compelling evidence that it is imperative to firmly commit to doubling the federal investment in the agencies that support basic research in the physical sciences. If we fail to make this investment, we not only risk falling behind other countries, but we also fail to produce the seed corn that is essential to our long-term prosperity."

I believe it is also time to commit to a very substantial increase in the federal investment in energy research. This is the right thing to do and the right time to do it, for reasons that are economic and environmental, and I am confident that this is an investment that would be repaid many times over.””

Today's roundtable on U.S. competitiveness provided an opportunity for members of Congress to discuss with industry leaders, university presidents, federal government officials, and research scientists the necessary steps for maintaining U.S. scientific leadership.

Other participating members of Congress included Bart Gordon, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology; John Larson, Chairman, U.S. House Democratic Caucus for the 111th Congress; Edward Markey, Chairman, U.S. House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming; and George Miller, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor. Other participants included Norman Augustine, Former President and CEO, Lockheed Martin; Dr. Craig Barrett, Chairman of the Board, Intel Corporation; Dr. Robert Berdahl, President, Association of American Universities; Dr. Bruce Bursten, President, American Chemical Society; Dr. Francis Collins, Former Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute; Professor Phillip Griffiths, School of Mathematics, The Institute for Advanced Studies; Professor John Holdren, Director of the Program on Science, Technology, and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; President Shirley Ann Jackson, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Dr. Peter Kim, President, Merck Research Laboratories; Dr. Thomas Mason, Director, Oak Ridge National Lab; Professor Michael Oppenheimer, Woodrow Wilson School and Department of Geosciences, Princeton University; Professor Jeremiah Ostriker, Director of the Princeton Institute for Computational Science and Engineering (PICSciE); Professor Harold Shapiro, President Emeritus and Professor of Economics and Public Affairs, Princeton University; Dr. Charles Vest, President, National Academy of Engineering and Vice Chair, National Research Council; Professor Maria Zuber, Head of the Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"What we learned today from the discussion with these distinguished leaders will start a conversation that we will take back to Washington," Holt added. ""This discussion highlighted the importance of our innovation infrastructure to ensure American competitiveness in the long-term. I look forward to working with my colleagues on ways to strengthen that innovation infrastructure in the future.""